

HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY.

RETURN to an Address of the Honourable The House of Commons,
dated 19 February 1857 ;—for,

“ COPY of a DESPATCH from HER MAJESTY’S SECRETARY of STATE for the COLONIES to the GOVERNOR-GENERAL of *Canada*, dated the 4th day of December 1856, together with a Copy of the REPLY from the GOVERNOR-GENERAL, dated the 17th day of January 1857, inclosing a MINUTE of the COUNCIL on the Subject of the HUDSON’S BAY COMPANY’S TERRITORIES.”

Colonial Office, }
12 March 1857. }

H. LABOUCHERE.

SCHEDULE.

Number in Series.	From whom.	Date and Number.	SUBJECT.	Page.
1	The Right Hon. H. Labouchere to Governor Sir E. Head.	1856: 4 Dec. - No. 179	Stating that it is the intention of Her Majesty’s Government to bring the whole subject of the affairs of the Hudson’s Bay Company under the investigation of a Committee of the House of Commons, and desiring him to consider what steps it may be necessary to take in order that the views of the Provincial Government may be represented before the Committee - - -	1
2	Governor Sir E. Head to the Right Hon. H. Labouchere.	1857: 17 Jan. - No. 9	In reply to preceding Despatch, and enclosing a Minute of the Council on the subject - - -	2

— No. 1. —

(No. 179.)

COPY of DESPATCH from the Right Honourable *H. Labouchere* to Governor-General Sir *E. Head*.

Sir,
Downing-street, 4 December 1856.
I AM desirous of informing you, at the earliest period, of certain important questions which have recently been raised respecting the affairs of the Hudson’s Bay Company in British North America, and of the steps which Her Majesty’s Government have in contemplation regarding them.

You are aware that the Hudson’s Bay Company claim, under their charter of 1670, and the various Acts of Parliament which they consider to have subsequently recognised it, rights of proprietorship, exclusive trade, taxation, and government, over all the regions under British dominion watered by streams flowing into Hudson’s Bay. The extent and ground of this claim are defined in the “Statement of Rights,” printed in the annexed Parliamentary Paper, and in the accompanying Map.

Parliamentary
Paper, No. 547, of
1842, page 9.

The Hudson's Bay Company also claim, and actually exercise rights of exclusive trade, although not the ownership of the soil, over all the territory comprised in a certain license to trade, granted in the year 1838 by the Crown, under the provisions of the Act "for regulating the Fur Trade," 1 & 2 Geo. 4, c. 66, of which license copy is also annexed to this despatch.

It has been intimated to me, on the part of the Hudson's Bay Company, that as their license expires in 1859, and as a very long period is required before any important change of arrangements can be notified and acted on throughout the vast and distant regions affected by it, it will be very desirable that the views of Her Majesty's Government and of Parliament as to the renewal of the license should be ascertained as early as possible.

Her Majesty's Government have therefore determined on bringing the whole subject under the investigation of a Committee of the House of Commons at the earliest convenient time. The inquiry will mainly be directed to the question of the renewal of the license; but it must incidentally embrace the general position and prospects of the Hudson's Bay Company.

As many points may arise in the course of this inquiry which may affect the interests of Canada, I have to instruct you to consider, with the advice of your Council, the question whether it may be desirable to send witnesses to appear before the Committee, or in any other manner to cause the views of the provincial government and the interests of the Canadian community to be represented before this Committee.

I have, &c.
(signed) *H. Labouchere.*

— No. 2. —

(No. 9.)

COPY of DESPATCH from Governor-General Sir *E. Head* to the Right Honourable *H. Labouchere.*

Government House, Toronto, C. W.,
17 January 1857.

Sir,

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge your despatch of 4th December last, No. 179, relating to the Hudson's Bay Company.

January 17, 1857.

I now enclose a copy of a Minute of Council which I have approved this day. At the same time I desire to observe that I express no opinion of my own as to the fact that the western boundary of Canada extends to the Pacific Ocean.

I have, &c.
(signed) *Edmund Head.*

COPY of a REPORT of a COMMITTEE of the Honourable the EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, dated 17th January 1857, approved by His Excellency the Governor-General.

THE Committee of Council have read with great satisfaction the despatch of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, of the 4th of December last, on the subject of the Hudson's Bay Company's occupation of the great North-west territory of America.

They rejoice that the important position and advantages of that great portion of the continent have received such prominent attention from the Imperial Government, and are to undergo the examination and consideration of a Committee of the House of Commons in England.

The Committee desire to urge the importance of ascertaining the limits of Canada, in the direction of the territory over which the Hudson's Bay Company claim jurisdiction. The general feeling here is strongly that the western boundary of Canada extends to the Pacific Ocean.

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HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY.

3

In this, or in any view, the tracing and fixing on the ground, the line of separation between the United States and these territories of the North-west is of great importance. The rapid settlement of Minnesota, shortly to be admitted a state of the American Union, renders this the more necessary, for as civilisation approaches the boundary, so will be increased the difficulty of maintaining the distinction between the rights of the two nations on the frontier. Already, the Committee have reason to believe that difficulties in this respect have occurred, or at least have been threatened, and the importance cannot be underrated of early guarding against any such.

The Committee are most anxious that Canadian interests should be properly represented before the proposed Committee of the House, and that opportunity should be afforded for carefully and closely watching any evidence that may be adduced before that body, and they will take the earliest occasion of suggesting to your Excellency the manner in which they conceive this can be best accomplished. Situated as Canada is, she necessarily has an immediate interest in every portion of British North America, and the question of the jurisdiction and title claimed by the Hudson's Bay Company is to her of paramount importance.

(Certified.)

(signed) *Wm. H. Lee, C. E. C.*
